

News Sheet of the American Branch of the Anglican Society

FEBRUARY — 1944

The Annual Meeting of the American Branch of the Anglican Society was held on Thursday, January 20, 1944, at 4:00 P. M., in the Parish House of the Church of the Incarnation, Madison Avenue and 35th Street, New York. The President took the chair and offered prayer. The Rev. Charles E. Hill was elected Secretary pro tem in the absence of the Secretary. The Treasurer gave a good report, showing that our finances were in sound condition with a good balance.

Canon Daniels, Chairman of the Extension Committee, reported that he had made a very interesting trip to Quincy, Ill., on the invitation of the Bishop of Quincy, to conduct a "Clergy School." He celebrated the Holy Communion and gave some instructions as to celebrating according to the Anglican rite; he also gave two lectures on Anglican standards and distributed much literature; several new members joined. Also, he went to General Convention in Cleveland last October and distributed many Anglican Society leaflets and held many interviews, gaining eight new members. He suggested that we enlarge our propagandist material and issue many more leaflets.

The President spoke of his desire to have a Literary Editor for the Society, through whose hands all matter to be published by the Society should go, and he desired a more vigorous "literary" campaign; he wanted our membership to be much larger; he thought that by persistent effort we could refute the idea that the Society is reviving a "British Museum" type of service.

Our Honorary President, the Rt. Rev. the Bishop of Albany, addressed the meeting briefly stating how necessary it was to issue more literature so as to make our objects known; he felt sure that an immense number of Church people are with us if only we could reach them and show what we are trying to do.

The following officers were elected:

Hon. President: the Rt. Rev. Dr. G. Ashton Oldham, Bishop of Albany.

President: the Rev. Edward R. Welles, about to be Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral, Buffalo.

Vice-President: the Rev. Dr. J. Wilson Sutton, Rector, St. Stephen's Church, New York.

Secretary: the Rev. Charles E. Hill, Rector, Christ Church, Ballston Spa., N. Y.

Treasurer: Mr. Richard A. Zerega.

The President appointed to the Executive Committee:

The Rev. Canon Daniels.

The Rev. F. W. Fitts.

The Rev. Francis Blake.

The Officers are members ex-officio of this committee.

The President reserved his appointment of the Extension Committee as Canon Daniels wished to be relieved of this, a work he has done splendidly.

The President appointed as Editor of the News Sheet, the Rev. Francis Blake, to take effect after the February issue.

The President appointed the Rev. Dr. Sutton as Literary Editor.

Evensong was said at 5:00 P. M. in the Chapel of the Church of the Incarnation by the President. An excellent sermon on "Prayer Book Ideals" was preached by the Rev. Stephen F. Bayne, Jr., Chaplain of Columbia University.

NOTES BY THE EDITOR

The Annual Meeting while not largely attended was certainly very successful. The bounden duty of the Society to issue more leaflets and let people know for what it stands became very clear. It does seem that with such a great heritage as is ours we ought to be able to do a great deal with it. There is no other branch of Christendom which has what we have, the matchless beauty of the Authorized Version of the Bible, the magnificent prose of the Book of Common Prayer, the deeply spiritual "atmosphere" of our services, the dignity, and simplicity of the Prayer Book offices. I am sure that immediately our officers will get to work to provide many more leaflets and to reach many more Church people.

This is the last issue of the News Sheet for which the present Editor is responsible. It is a very good thing to have a new Editor, especially as he is the Rev. Francis F. E. Blake, new Rector of St. Matthew's Parish, Unadilla, in the Diocese of Albany.

MODERN DOWSINGS IN CAMBRIDGE

ICONOCLASTS WANTED

Cambridge, England, has a William Dowsing Society. It believes there has been over-much blaming of this man, who, in 1643, carried out a celebrated tour through Cambridgeshire and Suffolk, defacing or removing superstitious church ornaments. Accordingly it appointed two commissioners—F. Brittain and Bernard Manning—to do the same, *mutatis mutandis*, for the Anglican places of worship in the town of Cambridge. A delightful satire, *Babylon Bruis'd* and *Mount Moriah Rended*, tells of their doings. It may be assumed that their useful activities are but theoretical. It is up to the priests and people of Cambridge to give them actuality. Cambridge, it may be said, stands in no greater need of modern Dowsings than any other place. Perhaps we may yet see the birth of daughter-societies everywhere, to be named after celebrated iconoclasts who threw down and cast out with vigour in days of old in other localities.

Mr. Brittain is of the Church of England, a believer, it is stated, "in east worship and dropping worship," while Mr. Manning is not ashamed to be called "painful and fanatical upholder of Master Calvin." Remarkable, therefore, is their ecclesiological and artistic unanimity, as well as their dislike of the Revised Version, which as a superstition they remove from lecterns, putting "ye Bible in place thereof" and their contempt for "a Booke of rhymes and ditties entituled Songs of Prayse," which on one occasion they publicly burn and invariably cast out when they find it. Churches high and low are criticized indifferently and with devastating wit. How noticeable is the fall from grace of low churches which are adorned in the worst fashion of the nineteenth century furbishers, and nowadays never display the not inartistic austerity of puritan places of worship at their best! When honoured by invitations to preach in ultra-low churches, the present writer has always hopefully lugged a large suitcase, containing gown (or black gown as the phrase has it) along with surplice, but never has he succeeded in getting permission to preach but in his surplice, the only decent and comely one to be seen.

Our two commissioners are herculean and of boundless energy. Unaided, they kindly break down some church bells which have the maddening habit of playing "Three Blind Mice"; they yank large lecterns, very properly, back into the midst in college chapels, break green windows which make a church feel like an aquarium, and remove all the windows from another fair-sized church. Also happily they do not forget to tear off that irritating piece of lace from the altar of Trinity College, admonish a seminary to get a frontal, and also they "outed ye Boulder from beneath" a flower vase,

thus correcting the rather inane fashion which has grown up to replace the dreadful pair of brass vases on gradines. Benches, chairs and faldstools, which clutter up sanctuaries and are of no conceivable use, are displaced, and organs and choir-stalls are carried bodily to west ends of churches. Gargantuan organs are cut down in size, and ugly pipes beautifully gilded, under the hand of these ecclesiological berserks, who likewise break down all the marble at the east end of one church and cast it forth.

Hearty congratulations will go to our friends on discovering a church—that of St. Botolph—which, possessing an altarpiece of the crucifixion, declines to commit the solecism of placing a cross or crucifix before it. Such artistic, liturgical and common sense is rare. The University Church, however, places a brass cross immediately in front of a stone crucifixion.

In addition to the blue-book of rhymes, the commissioners rightly criticize the new too deep-rooted habit of blue carpets and kneelers, which, as they say, direct men's eyes from the altar to the floor. Outside their jurisdiction, it may be observed that a certain cathedral has been done out in blue in this way almost from top to toe, even the altars being decked permanently in blue except one. The effect is penitential, in a building badly needing colour and a little originality. They realize the devastating effect of bright red, too, and are to be congratulated on burning all the red cassocks at King's.

At St. Benet's a side altar is resold for its original purpose of an ice-cream barrow, and the high altar denuded of a valance which gives it, they feel, some resemblance to "the bed of the good Queen Victoria."

The commissioners never hesitate a moment at a children's corner. It is at once utterly destroyed, with its false altar, penny candlesticks, and customary accumulation of junk. If the church is too large for them, why cannot children pray in one of the chapels?—and children's services (an overrated activity) cannot anyhow be held in one of these small corners. Here especially the commissioners will earn thanks for their courage and drive.

(The amusing article above is quoted from the English Guardian of Feb. 14, 1941. The judicious will welcome these iconoclasts in the U. S. A.!)

"The Screwtape Letters" purporting to be from an elderly devil in Hell to a younger devil on earth, advising him how to proceed to cause people to reject the Christian Religion, is a very amusing and penetrating small book by Mr. C. S. Lewis, Fellow of Magdalene College, Oxford. The Macmillan Co., of New York, the publishers, have graciously consented to the following reprint of most of Chapter XVI.

My Dear Wormnwood,

You mentioned casually in your last letter that the patient has continued to attend one church, and one only, since he was converted, and that he is not wholly pleased with it. May I ask what you are about? Why have I no report on the causes of his fidelity to the parish church? Do you realise that unless it is due to indifference it is a very bad thing? Surely you know that if a man can't be cured of churchgoing, the next best thing is to send him all over the neighborhood looking for the church that "suits" him until he becomes a taster or connoisseur of churches.

The two churches nearest to him, I have looked up in the office. Both have certain claims. At the first of the Vicar is a man who has been so long engaged in watering down the faith to make it easier for a supposedly incredulous and hard-headed con-

gregation that it is now he who shocks his parishioners with his unbelief, not vice versa. He has undermined many a soul's Christianity. His conduct of the services is also admirable. In order to spare the laity all "difficulties" he has deserted both the lectionary and the appointed psalms and now, without noticing it, revolves endlessly round the little treadmill of his fifteen favourite psalms and twenty favourite lessons. We are thus safe from the danger that any truth not already familiar to him and to his flock should ever reach them through Scripture. But perhaps your patient is not quite silly enough for this church—or not yet?

At the other church we have Fr. Spike. The humans are often puzzled to understand the range of his opinions—why he is one day almost a Communist and the next not far from some kind of theocratic Fascism—one day a scholastic, and the next prepared to deny human reason altogether—one day immersed in politics, and, the day after, declaring that all states of this world are equally "under judgment". We, of course, see the connecting link, which is Hatred. The man cannot bring himself to preach anything which is not calculated to shock, grieve, puzzle, or humiliate his parents and their friends. A sermon which such people could accept would be to him as insipid as a poem which they could scan. There is also a promising streak of dishonesty in him; we are teaching him to say "The teaching of the Church is" when he really means "I'm almost sure I read recently in Maritain or someone of that sort". But I must warn you that he has one fatal defect: he really believes. And this may yet mar all.

But there is one good point which both these churches have in common—they are both party churches. I think I warned you before that if your patient can't be kept out of the church, he ought at least to be violently attached to some party within it. I don't mean on really doctrinal issues; about those, the more lukewarm he is the better. And it isn't the doctrines on which we chiefly depend for producing malice. The real fun is working up hatred between those who say "mass" and those who say "holy communion" when neither party could possibly state the difference between, say, Hooker's doctrine and Thomas Aquinas', in any form which would hold water for five minutes. And all the purely indifferent things—candles and clothes and what not—are an admirable ground for our activities. We have quite removed from men's minds what that pestilent fellow Paul used to teach about food and other unessentials—namely, that the human without scruples should always give in to the human with scruples. You would think they could not fail to see the application. You would expect to find the "low" churchman genuflecting and crossing himself lest the weak conscience of his "high" brother should be moved to irreverence, and the "high" one refraining from these exercises lest he should betray his "low" brother into idolatry. And so it would have been but for our ceaseless labour. Without that the variety of usage within the Church of England might have become a positive hotbed of charity and humility,

Your affectionate uncle

SCREWTAPE.